

# Your Pet and Your New Baby



# Caring for pets provides wonderful opportunities for children

Pets teach  
children  
responsibility  
commitment and  
compassion



- Approximately 64% of New Zealand households have at least one pet
- NZ has one of the highest proportion of pets in the world



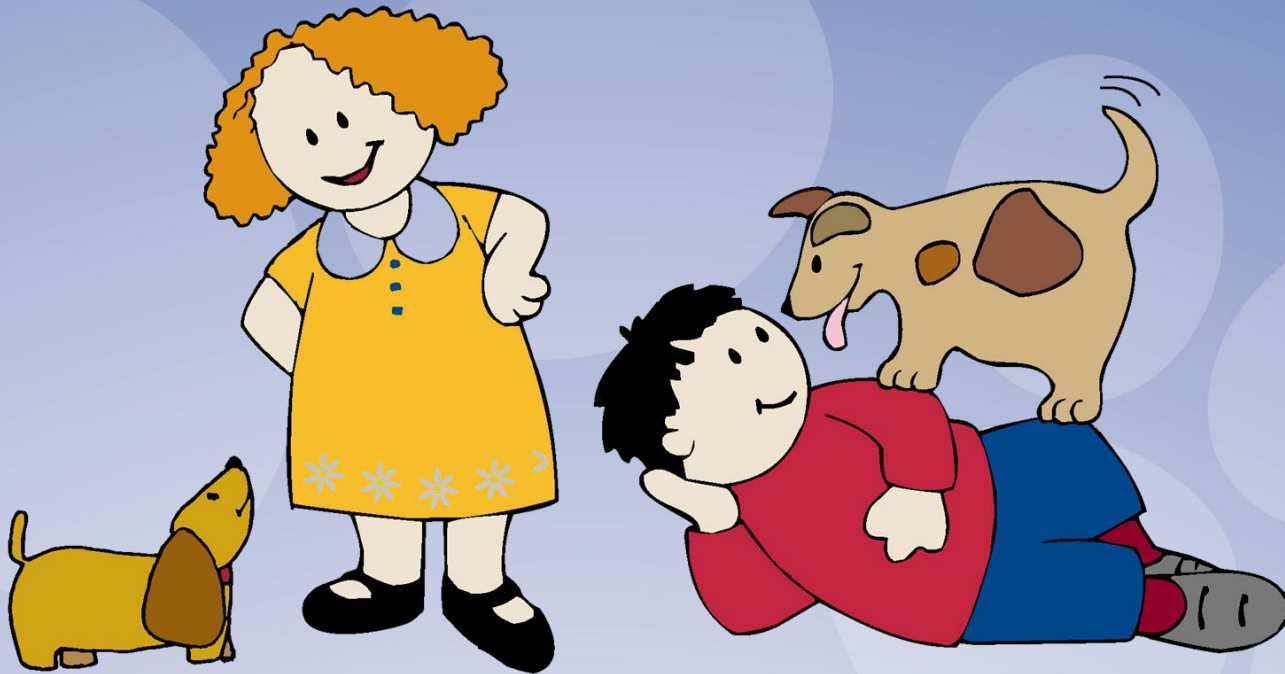
# Who has a pet? most of us do.....

- Over 500,000 dogs registered in NZ
- More than one cat per household in NZ
- So even if you have no pets your children are likely to meet pets in other places





**Children and pets should be supervised at all times, because...**



- 80% of children bitten by dogs are bitten in their **own** or a **friend's home**
- even the best dog or cat may bite or scratch, especially if frightened



# Because . . .

- kids are unpredictable with animals
- dogs and cats may not appreciate being hugged, cuddled or poked



# **Why do dogs bite babies, toddlers, and young children?**

think about how young children  
behave . . .





babies spend most of their time lying down, wriggling, crying - they smell and behave differently to adults

Children between the ages of two and four are crawling and learning to walk



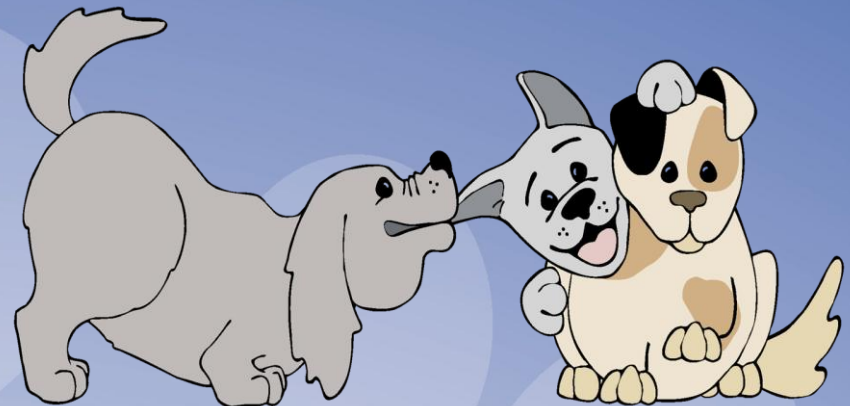
# From age four, children tend to handle dogs inappropriately

- approaching dogs
- playing with dogs - dress up
- particularly with dogs they have grown up with



# Dogs and kids

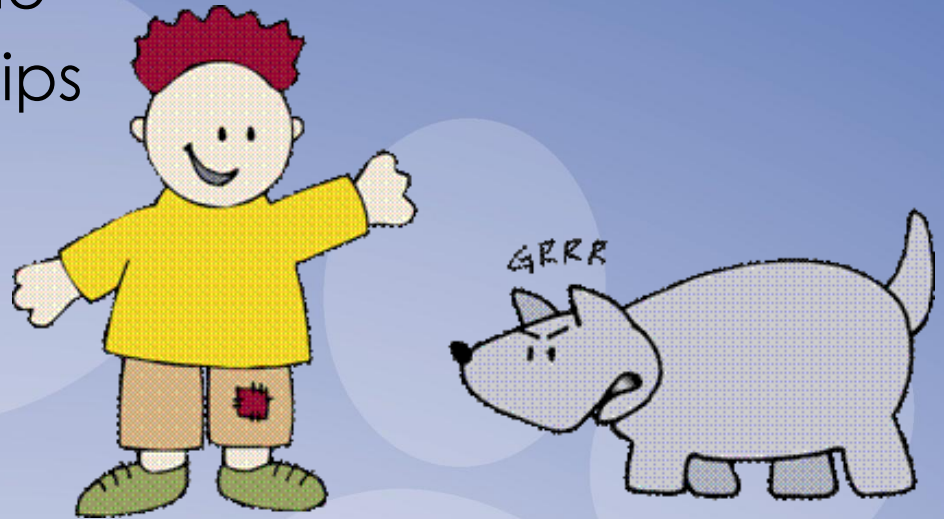
- dogs are pack animals
- you and your family are members of your dog's 'pack'
- pack rank is established through challenging weaker members
- babies and young children cannot establish a superior position in the pack





# Dogs and kids

- dogs may try to discipline children with growls or nips
- squeals, screams or sudden movements may trigger a dog's predatory instincts



# Dogs and kids

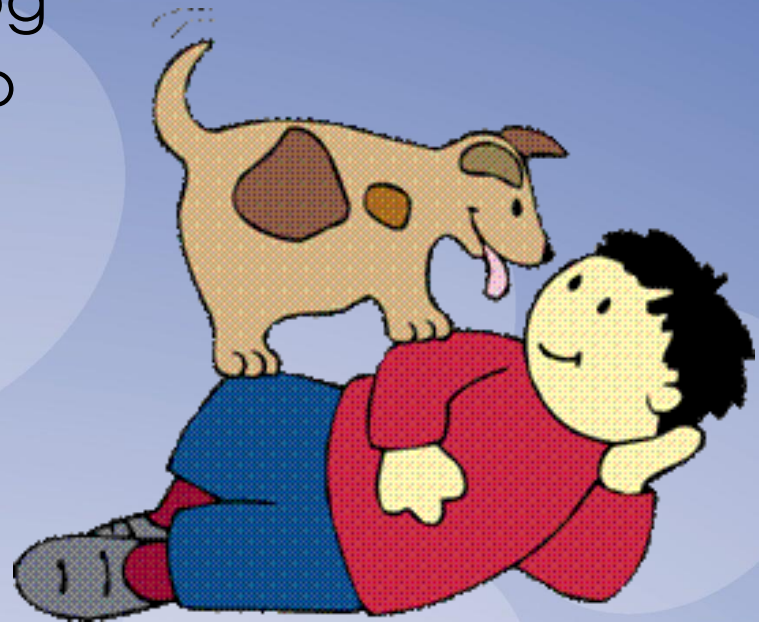
**teach your dog that it is at the bottom of the pack:**

- always feed the dog last - once all the humans have eaten
- youngest human pack member (within reason) controls the food
- ensure the dog is last through any doorways
- never let a dog sit upstairs or uphill of anyone



# Dogs and kids

- initiate play with the dog
  - don't allow the dog to start every game
- avoid games that reward strength
- give the dog it's own space



# To help your dog adjust to your new arrival

- praise the dog in the presence of the baby
- feed the dog in the presence of the baby
- take walks together





# Before you bring baby home from hospital

- Bring home clothing or blankets with babies scent on them
- Have the baby's room already set up as a no-go zone for pets
- Have routines established for your pet
  - Mealtimes
  - Exercise
  - Together time

# Teach children to behave correctly around dogs

- not all dogs are friendly
- meeting dogs
- basic rules
- warning signs



# Meeting new dogs

- If the owner is present ask ...**“Can I pat your dog?”**
- If OK, offer the dog the back of your hand to smell
- Always approach from the side, never from behind
- If the dog appears relaxed, stroke under it's chin or on it's chest



# Basic rules

## avoid approaching a dog that is . . .

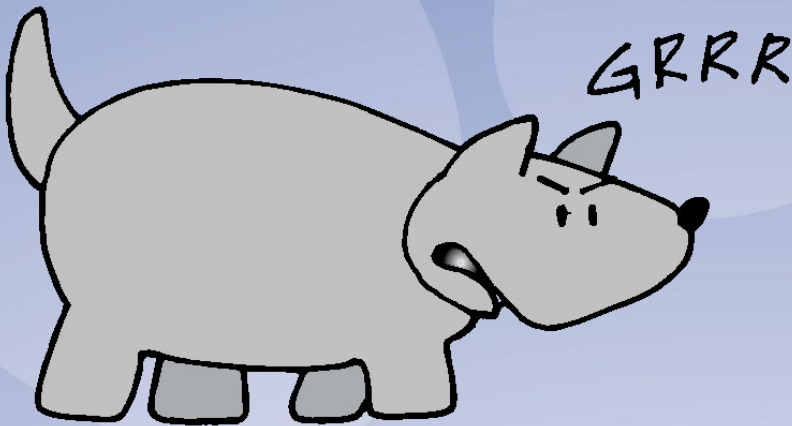


- Alone - with no owner present
- tied up
- sleeping
- eating
- playing with a toy
- unknown
- working



# Warning signs

- growling
- curled lips
- backing away
- hair rising on back
- narrowed eyes
- ears back
- stiff 'tail wagging



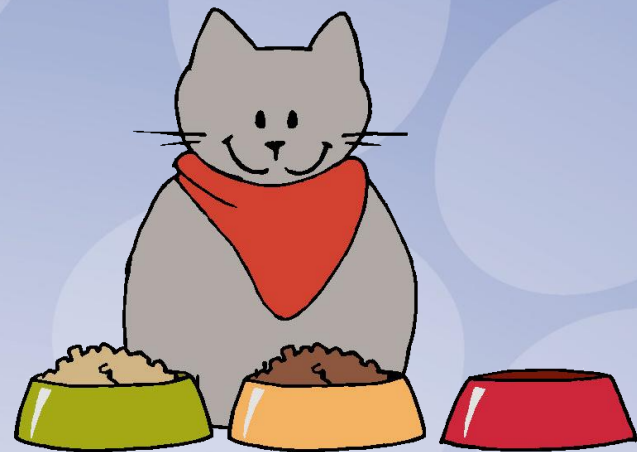
# If a strange dog approaches . . .

- stand still and quiet
- put your hands behind your back
- turn your head and avoid eye contact

# Cats and kids

## cats like routine... babies upset routines

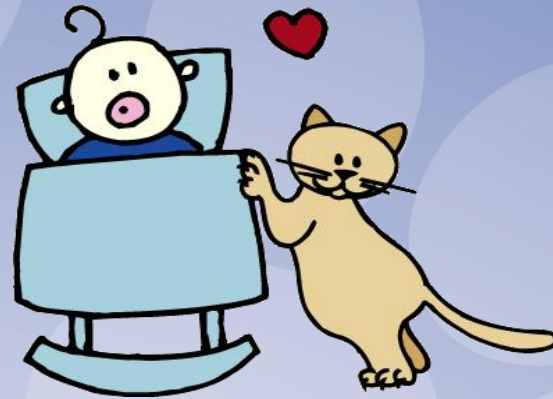
- try to keep meal and play time steady for the cat
- give the cat as much attention as possible
- introduce the cat to the new baby while holding the baby in your arms



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# Cats love a warm elevated place to sleep and may try to curl up with baby

- never leave the cat and the baby alone
- always close the nursery door **or**
- install a flyscreen door to baby's room





# To keep everyone healthy

- always wash hands thoroughly after handling pets or their droppings
- worm pets regularly, vaccinate annually and treat for fleas



# Children with pets

- have stronger immune systems
- take fewer days off school sick
- adjust better to serious illness
- are less afraid



**Pets provide  
companionship,  
self-esteem and  
good health**



# Almost all pets can remain an integral part of the family's lifestyle if .

• •

- baby's arrival is well-managed
- routines are changed well beforehand
- pets learn to associate baby with positive experiences





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